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ABSTRACT

This study explored what teacher candidates consider to be good and appropriate citizenship behaviors as they plan to teach young learners. The study also assessed an original case study scenario for its effectiveness for engaging social studies methods students. An original case study focusing on citizenship was developed and presented to teacher candidates in social studies methods classes. The scenario was also used as part of an online course with teachers, and their responses were compared with those of teacher candidates. The scenario describes the selection of a school principal as an outstanding citizen and the identification of the values and actions that made her outstanding, as well as the selection of other activities in which she might participate. The second part of the scenario focuses on the decision of teachers to develop a service learning project for the school. Sixty-one undergraduate teacher candidates, 18 graduate students in education, and 33 online graduate students responded to the scenario. All participants were able to identify the traits that made the scenario's principal a good citizen, and all students were able to suggest an additional activity in which she might participate. Almost all teacher candidates and teachers (graduate students) selected one of three sample projects described in the scenario for the service learning project. Findings also suggest that the case scenario is an effective tool for engaging social studies teacher candidates and graduate students in understanding the importance of enlightened political engagement in the social studies curriculum. (Contains 13 references.) (SLD)

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PROMOTING ENLIGHTENED POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT BY USING A CITIZENSHIP SCENARIO WITH TEACHER CANDIDATES AND EXPERIENCED TEACHERS

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PROMOTING ENLIGHTENED POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT BY USING A CITIZENSHIP SCENARIO WITH TEACHER CANDIDATES AND EXPERIENCED TEACHERS

This research addresses the general theme of the conference regarding quality education and shared responsibility by asking the question, "What do teacher candidates consider good and appropriate citizenship behaviors?" as they grapple with their responsibilities of promoting effective appropriate citizenship behaviors.

Contextual Setting:

It is a given that for United States democratic traditions to continue in the future, citizenship education is as important today as at any other time in history. In the twenty-first century citizens of our nation must deal with rapid change; complex local, national, and global issues; and conflicts stemming from cultural, religious, and economic tensions, the very survival of democracy depends upon the active participation of individual citizen. A long-term major concern of social studies educators, today as in the past, is determining what is appropriate to include in the school curriculum regarding citizenship and citizenship education.

The National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS),the largest organization of social studies educators, has long supported the position that a primary goal of public education is to prepare students to be engaged as effective citizens. NCSS has defined an effective citizen as one, " who has the knowledge, skills, and attitudes required to assume the 'office of citizen' in our democratic republic." NCSS goes on to declare that accomplishing this goal requires that every student must participate in citizenship education activities each year. "These activities should expand civic knowledge, develop participation skills, and support the belief that, in a democracy, the actions of each person makes a difference. Throughout the curriculum and at every grade level, students should have opportunities to apply their civic knowledge, skills, and values as they work to solve real problems in their school, the community, our nation, and the world. These opportunities should be a part of a well planned and organized citizenship program" (NCSS, 2001).

Politicians and others since the Jeffersonian era have supported education as a primary need for all citizens to ensure the survival of democratic government. Senator Everett M. Dirksen described the relationship between good citizenship and the need to teach young children as, "The classroom is one very good place, and for some children the only place, where an environment conducive to the learning and practice of the basis for good citizenship can be provided." He identified the individual teacher as the possessor of the final obligation for formally teaching good citizenship (Dirksen,1967). As part of the joint efforts of civic educators and others who are calling for a revitalization and renewal of civic/citizenship education, Supreme Court Justice Anthony Kennedy told participants at an unprecedented meeting of federal judges and representatives of 22 national groups, "Some people think government is for experts. That does not accord with basic democratic theory.... We can help in a process that is every American's mission and every American's purpose" (Administrative Office of the U.S. Court, 2002).

The primary purpose of social studies education is defined by the National Council for the Social Studies (1994) as helping "young people develop the ability to make informed and reasoned decisions for the public good as citizens of a culturally diverse, democratic society in an interdependent world." Earlier in 1971 the APSA (American Political Science Association) Committee on Pre-Collegiate Education recommended that elementary and secondary schools should emphasize... "skills needed to participate effectively and democratically in the life of the society." Patricia G. Avery, et al., noted that "the public schools can and should provide a forum for developing deliberative skills; the civics classroom is a most appropriate place for fostering reflection..." (Avery, et al, 1996. 200).

John Patrick, defines democratic citizenship as having the four components of knowledge of citizenship and government, cognitive skills, participatory skills, and values and dispositions related to democracy. Development of cognitive and participatory skills requires students to develop intellectual knowledge through active learning both in and out of

the classroom. A deep understanding of each component is essential for citizenship in a democracy to provide a strong commitment to democracy based upon reason (Patrick, 1999). NCSS describes the ideal social studies teacher as a person who models democratic principles and discusses them as they relate to curriculum content and current events (NCSS,1994.160).

Unfortunately, recent research indicates that elementary teachers do not focus units of study on civics and citizenship and that often high school government courses fail to focus on active participation and current issues impacting the lives of students and families (Haas and Laughlin, 2001; United States Department of Education, 1999). On the whole the average United States ninth grade student's understanding of democracy remains superficial with 12 percent of the students indicating that they never or hardly ever studied social studies (civics) in school (Baldi, et al., 2001). Student scores based on the results of 1998 NAEP civics assessment were low. Only 2 percent of the students at any grade level performed at an advanced level. Overall, approximately 25% of

the students performed at the proficient level. (U. S. Dept. Ed., 1999. x).

School experience is one of the factors that create an interest in political efficacy and citizens' activities (Torney-Purta, et al., 1999). Hahn (1999) in summarizing United States instructional activities in civics classes noted that there was great variation in content and practical application between classes and grade levels. While there has been much discussion concerning how to best teach civics and citizenship education by advocates of active participation, reviewers of research have not been able to affirm which instructional strategies are more effective. Most of the recent research related to K-12 civic education has come through the efforts of the United States Department of Education. It includes the results of multiple-choice tests, short written responses, and responses to multiple choice questions concerning personal behaviors and school activities. Relying mainly on survey research political scientists have found that years of schooling is the chief predictive variable of citizenship knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors the combination of which

Walter Parker refers to as Enlightened Political Engagement (Parker, 2001,100).

Clarifying the definition of good citizenship to K-12 learners requires that teachers make numerous and important assessment, curriculum, and instructional decisions. Often teachers have not given sufficient thought to the importance of such decisions or to the many interpretations that society holds toward citizenship practices.

Objectives of the Study:

1. Tap into teacher candidates' knowledge, understanding, and interpretation of citizenship education as perceived by young learners.

2. Identify examples of teacher candidates reflections and ways, however tentative, to instruct or assist learners to engage in activities related to Enlightened Political Engagement.

3. Assess an original case study scenario on its effectiveness for engaging social studies methods

teacher candidates in understanding the importance of Enlightened Political Engagement to the K-12 social studies curriculum.

Methodology of the Study:

1. An original case study scenario focusing on citizenship was developed, piloted, and revised as needed.

2. Teacher candidates in three states used the scenario as a part of a social studies methods class and responded by writing individual answers to several questions.

3. Results were analyzed using quantitative and qualitative research methods to examine the data.

4. The scenario was used as part of an on-line course with teachers and the data were analyzed and compared with that from the teacher candidates.

Description of Case Study Scenario:

The Main Street School Scenario was written as an authentic learning experience for educators. In the scenario a first grade teacher shared with his class a story from the local newspaper that announced the selection of the school's principal, Mrs. Gomez, as

the city's outstanding citizen of the year. The scenario was divided into two section each with a task of questions to which the students were to make written responses. The first part of the scenario related why Mrs. Gomez was selected as the outstanding citizen and described responses people and the first grade class made to her selection. The first task consisted of four questions: three required the identification of the values and actions of Mrs. Gomez. One question asked for predictions of the words that first grade students would use to describe and celebrate Mrs. Gomez's outstanding citizenship behaviors. The fourth question required inferences from what was known about Mrs. Gomes to predict a logical future project in which Mrs. Gomez might participate. The second part of the scenario focused on a decision of the teachers to develop a service-learning project for the school. The tasks asked the reader to respond by selecting one of the proposed projects and to describe in some detail how they envisioned the project proceeding, its goals and relationship to social studies standards, and parental responses to the projects. It also suggested that schools recognize students with a good citizenship

award and asked what would be three criteria for such an award and if and why schools should recognize good citizenship with awards.

Description of Participants:

A total of 61 teacher candidates, 37 seeking secondary certifications and 24 seeking elementary certification, responded individually in writing to the "Examining Citizenship Scenario." Thirty-seven were males and 24 females. Three were African American and the 58 were Caucasian. Undergraduate students, even those who were presently in a program with multiple field experiences, had had little teaching experience with K-12 students in schools at the time they responded to the scenario. While most of the undergraduates were in their early twenties, several in all classes had work for several years in other professions or served in and military prior to entering teacher education and several were parents of school age children.

At the graduate level data was collected from a total of 18 students. In one graduate class of 12 students 11 were working toward initial certification and had no prior teaching experience while one member

of the class had completed student teaching. Several students had worked for a number of years in different professions before entering educational preparation. Most of the graduate students were currently working to pay for their living expenses while seeking certification and degrees in education. In a second graduate class four of the six students were currently teaching in secondary or middle schools and two students had no teaching experience.

The opportunity became available to use the scenario with a third graduate class of 33 in an on-line course. These teachers were currently teachers at one of several international schools in Ecuador and were completing the course as part of a masters degree with an American University. These students all had teaching experience. In addition, the on-line users read the module, discussed it in a small group, and then reported their decisions to the course instructor. Such procedure were slightly different from that used by the other classes. Therefore, the qualitative differences in the responses of these teachers to the scenario's tasks cannot be attributed only to the impact of prior individual teaching experience.

Findings from the Study:

Data on the first research objective concerning teacher candidates' knowledge, understanding, and interpretation of citizenship education as perceived by young learners, was positive. All of the participants were able to adequately respond to the first three questions which required recognition of the citizenship values and character traits of Mrs. Gomez as described or named in the scenario or which could be inferred logically from the description. The most commonly identified traits and values were: caring, nice, kind, active, giving, helpful, and hard working.

The fourth question asked, "Based on what you know, or can infer about Mrs. Gomez from the newspaper article, suggest another citizenship activity in which Mrs. Gomez logically might be expected to participate. Write two or three lines describing this activity and its goals." Again all of the students could identify a logical activity. The responses tended to fall into two categories. One focused on additional school activities often related to literacy or providing for care and after school activities that supplemented the

academic curriculum. The other category was centered in the community as a whole and tended to focus on improving the lives of individuals especially those identified as "less fortunate" because of special economic, social, or physical needs.

The study's second task was to identify examples of teacher candidates reflections and strategies they selected to engage students in that were related to Enlightened Political Engagement. Almost all of the teachers and teacher candidates selected one of three sample projects described in the scenario with most selecting the projects of studying about vision and helping to provide glasses or working with the local humane society to collect food and encourage adoption of animals. Fewer selected the study of local water quality for consumption and recreation. Only one selected the option that the students would identify their own problem and determine related actions for a service-learning project. In their descriptions of how they envisioned the project we noted that the graduate students who were teachers responded by providing more details on the instructional goals and procedures and were more likely to have the students play a role in making decisions related to the project. Teacher

candidates for the most part identified popular activities often observed in the community or school and concluded that they would teach students the desired outcome of cooperation to complete a project. Their comments sounded like those young students might have made as the comments reflected a lack of experience in helping students learn. Instructional strategies tended to view students as following the lead of the teacher or an adult rather than investigating the problem and cooperating in finding workable solutions. Many of their projects could well be done in a nation that does not have a democratic tradition because they focus mainly on doing good deeds. The following sample comments of the teacher candidates and teachers that illustrate these differences.

Project Descriptions by Teachers:

> "We selected project B- Humane Society. Teachers will be responsible for accessing students' prior knowledge of pets and problems associated with pets in the community. Then students will identify problems in their community by surveying people in the area,

interviewing humane society members, and using observations skills. Each grade will brainstorm solutions and possibly projects and develop strategies to implement them. These projects will include objectives, planned activities and measurable outcomes. (Certified Teacher)

"We would begin with having an eye care provider speak to the children about the importance of good vision, possibly a parent. Children would make posters about how to take care of our eyes. Next, children would begin to find ways to collect funds for eye testing and eye glasses. They could write letters to companies and corporations asking for corporate sponsorship for the program. Parents could help children organize a bake sale to raise funds. Children could solicit old eyeglasses from around the neighborhood to refurbish and give to the needy. They learn that what effects you effects your community, working together enhances community, and raising

money for needs vs. wants." (Certified Teacher)

"Our project would be a school wide recycling program. Proceeds for the program would go to purchase eyeglasses for less fortunate children. A. A few teachers and parents would need to take the initiative to organize the program (calling to have the recycling bins delivered, pick-up dates, etc…) Then, each class would be given a few weeks out of the year to recycle. They will have to collect the materials twice a week during the 6th period. The materials should be separated into glass, plastic, colored paper and white paper. B. Students learn about good citizenship by recognizing problems, learning values and learning skills needed in a democracy. Problems: The Earth has limited resources and we need to conserve them, and the poor often do without basic needs (such as eye glasses). Values: We shouldn't waste what

little resources we have. Skills for Democracy: Cooperate with one another to achieve a goal that will help the entire community." (Certified Teacher)

Teacher Candidate Responses included:

" Children could be on the adopt a pet commercials, host food drives, pass out flyers, hold a bake sale for money for Humane society, etc. Active involvement is what changes things and gets things done." (Secondary Candidate)

" I think option A would be good. I could see students looking on the Internet and finding out stuff. This would help them become good citizens because they would learn to help each other." (Secondary Candidate)

" Students could start collection boxes for the kids who need glasses. It shows that students can help out even when they don't know the person getting the help." (Secondary Candidate)

" Students would first study the

problem and learn about the Humane Society. Each class could plan a project intended to education the community on the issue, and the school as a whole could have a pet food drive. Students would learn about the problem of pet over-population, as well as how to properly care for pets. They would also learn the important of individuals actively working to solve community problems. To do this they would need to use skills including research, organizing, and communicating." (Secondary Candidate)

"I would take my students to the Humane Society so they can get information. I would like to see them organize a food drive, make posters about adopting a pet and learning how to take care of pets. The field trip would hopefully show how a non-profit organization works and shat it stands for. The activities hopefully show how students can be active participants in a community." (Elementary Candidate)

In explaining how the actions of the

selected project would help students learn about the values/dispositions, and skills needed by citizens living in a democracy secondary teachers wrote statements similar to the following.

> "Citizens of a democracy must be actively involved in enhancing their society. Through this project students learn how to take action to improve the community at large However,they also learn how they can individually contribute to society."

> "This provides opportunities to explore problems in the community, become active members of the problem solving process, develop and sense of belonging and responsibility in the community, working cooperatively towards a common goal."

All thought that schools should recognize outstanding citizens. Again some thought the actions of the student should be acknowledge for being good citizens in the context of the school setting and

another group included consideration of the larger community as well as in the school. In their rationales teachers and teacher candidates identified thee major justifications: 1. need for peer role models as motivators for others, 2. need to recognize civic actions by an institution that plays an major role in the life of youth, and 3. the role of the school as an institution of the community with the responsibility to help promote civic/citizenship behaviors. A few expressed a caution that awards, if given frequently, might become a competition for an external recognition rather than an indication of motivation for doing right things based on the civic values and ideals. One female secondary candidate expressed this perspective by writing, " Yes, students would portray random acts of kindness, but their doing it for recognition, not just because their values tell them it is right to do."

Most expressed the more positive nature of a citizenship award with statements such as:

> "It should be very important. The school cannot really justify the importance of stressing citizenship to the students if the students do not have proper recognition for

having this citizenship awarded."(Secondary)

"I believe there is no better institution to place the responsibility for recognizing citizenship than the public school. Schools are created and sustained by the citizenry who expect this institution to create a sense of good citizenship in its students. Students spend a great deal of time in schools, those who operate schools know better, perhaps even more than parents, what activities students involve themselves in." (Secondary)

"I believe that schools and individual teachers should recognize 'good citizens.' Often in classrooms students are singled out when they are doing something wrong. If students are recognized for being helpful, polite, creative, kind or critical in their thought, it encourages these traits in other students. (Elementary)

"I believe the school has the

responsibility to recognize positive and less than positive 'citizenship' behaviors in its students. Secondary education is almost like a practice run for citizenship. Students can learn (and make mistakes) about rules and responsibility while they learn about rewards and consequences for their actions. These are important lessons for future citizens." (Secondary)

A male secondary teacher at an international school wrote:

"I believe a citizenship award should be a high priority for the school to recognize. The citizenship award should be the highest award in social studies related classes. This would encourage other students to emulate the students who received the award, and positive aspects would carry over into the other areas of study. A good student-citizen would take seriously the implications to improve his community and the well being of humanity in general."

Three teachers from a different

> international school in Ecuador wrote, "We believe that it is the school's responsibility to help students become active community members. Additionally, the school can provide positive role models as examples to study and imitate. As Ecuadorians we think that it's important that our schools help develop national identity, pride, respect, and tolerance."

The third research objective was to assess the effectiveness of an original case study scenario for engaging social studies methods teacher candidates in understanding the importance of "Enlightened Political Engagement" to the K-12 social studies curriculum. The teacher candidates responded to all of the questions in a serious manner. There was a noticeable difference in the depth of understanding, the focus of the responders toward various questions, and the details concerning the goals and implementation of activities. Experienced teachers tended to provide greater details on how they would involve students in learning the content and planning activities. They were also more likely to seek parent and community involvement. Responders asked no questions concerning the meaning

of any of the imbedded tasks. One of the teacher candidates at the secondary level expressed her view of the activity by voluntarily writing,

"This is a wonderful activity! It is a citizenship lesson that does not focus on voting. This lesson provides many examples of ways to participate in a community for the benefit of all. I really enjoyed this!"

In examining the responses the researchers noted that there was a difference in the values and traits responders thought were present in the projects. Those at the elementary level seemed to stress being caring and being a good member of the school community through cooperation and kindness/compassion. Secondary responders tended to view the community as extending beyond the school and including a shared decision-making process. In this way the secondary responds better represented the type of actions identified by Parker as "Enlightened Political Engagement". There were also a large number of elementary responders whose responses revealed a lack of sincerity or lack of analysis of what they read and a failure to respond with the extended answers that revealed an understanding or appreciation of the

scenario tasks as authentic situations and decisions that teachers make related to the school and curriculum. This is of concern because methods classes usually taken close to student teaching, graduation, and stat certification. Such responses might suggest doing an assignment just to complete it rather than using the scenario as an authentic learning experience. This may well indicate that these students still lack an identification with and understanding of the role of a classroom teacher. It may also indicate a lack of understanding concerning democratic or civic knowledge, skills, ideals, and values.

Conclusions:

In class group discussions and through their written responses teacher candidates gave careful consideration to past school experiences and to their interactions with young learners. Teacher candidates indicated that they enjoyed sharing in the discussion portion of the exercise. Confusing wording encountered in the pilot study was apparently eliminated through revisions in the scenario. Analysis of the data of the written responses have generated five conclusions concerning citizenship education:

1. Teacher candidates and teachers were able to identify multiple appropriate student responses for the scenario.

2. Teacher candidates and teachers determined that students at all grade levels have the ability to analyze and discuss a citizenship related problem which extends beyond the classroom.

3. Teacher candidates and teachers indicated an ongoing need to incorporate knowledge of democratic practices, institutions, and values into the school's curriculum to promote citizenship through a recognition of democratic practices in daily life.

4. Teacher candidates and teachers responded differently to the scenario in ways that appeared to be related to the responders experiences in working with young learners and with the grade level teacher candidates anticipated teaching.

5. The impact of the small group discussion on the decision questions in the scenario cannot be determined from this study and needs to be specifically examined.

Recommendations:

Based on the preliminary analysis the authors make the following recommendations.

· Because most education majors come from a similar cultural background, that of the majority culture, and because the sample lacked a substantive minority representation, the use of this scenario needs to be pursued with participants from minority ethnic and racial groups to examine various perceptions of citizenship education. This recommendation is similar to recommendations by Parker concerning the need for future research toward Enlightened Political Engagement (Parker 2001).

· Similarly, research devoted to acquiring information about the perspectives of minorities students in grades K-12 on the characteristics of good citizenship is needed

· The scenario lesson should be extended to include tasks in which the knowledge, skills, and values associated with citizenship education are actually developed and or taught. Teacher candidates should also be asked to identify the focus of their citizenship lessons and tell how their views reflect the definition of citizenship used in the NAEP exams and how it combines the NCSS Standard VI Power,

Authority, and Governance and Standard X Civic, Ideals, and Practices as well as similar standards included in state and or local district guidelines.

* Research should be done with the on-line use of scenarios to determine if requiring a discussion with peers results in more complete understandings and authentic responses to the scenario.

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